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ABSTRACT

Through a personal narrative, this chapter describes the history of the Gomez Farias-Pajaro Valley Project, which was renamed Project MEDIR and is now known as the Binational Program. The Binational Program is administered by the Migrant Education Programs in 10 U.S. states and all 31 Mexican states and the federal district of Mexico City. This chapter is based on the chronological journals of Arlene Dorn, an elementary teacher who served as catalyst for the project's development. In 1976, Dorn took a sabbatical from Pajaro Valley Unified School District (California) to study in Mexico. At the time, approximately 20,000 Mexican students traveled between Mexico and California each year as their families pursued work as agricultural laborers. These students were never in Mexico in September at the start of the school year and therefore, were denied enrollment in Mexican schools when they returned to their hometowns in November. Dorn visited Gomez Farias, the hometown of many of her district's students; found administrators and teachers, there and in Mexico City, who were sympathetic to the plight of the international migrant students; arranged lines of communication between Mexican and California administrators; helped to develop the process of communicating students' academic records between schools in California and Mexico; and located private foundation funding to expand the program. In 1984, the project was institutionalized within the California Migrant Education Program. (SV)

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CHAPTER 9

Genesis of the Migrant Binational Program

ARLENE R. DORN
RETIRED TEACHER AND FORMER COORDINATOR OF THE
GÓMEZ FARÍAS PAJARO VALLEY PILOT PROJECT
(NOW KNOWN AS THE BINATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM)

This chapter describes, through a personal narrative, the history of the Gómez Farías-Pajaro Valley Project (GFPVP), which was renamed "Project MEDIR" and is now known as the "Binational Program." The Binational Program is administered by the Migrant Education Programs in 10 U.S. states and all 31 Mexican states and the federal district of Mexico City.

This project did not follow the usual pattern of development. Its development was a very personal experience for Arlene Dorn, a classroom teacher from California, who acted as the catalyst. The description of its history and development is based on Dorn's chronological journals, and begins in Mexico in 1976.

The History of the Gómez Farías-Pajaro Valley Project

In 1976 I took a sabbatical leave from Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), located in California, where I taught as an elementary teacher, to go to Mexico to study for a master's degree in education. Prior to leaving, an assistant superintendent asked me to find out where the town of Gómez Farías was because many of the Mexican

children in the schools came from that village. It was thought that it would be helpful to know something about their education in Mexico.

These migrant children spent from 1 to 6 months (usually November to April) of each school year in Mexico. The majority of the time the children could not enroll in the Mexican schools. This was due to a policy in Mexico that if one did not enroll in September, the beginning of the school year, then one must wait until the following year to enter school. These children were never in Mexico at that time, because their parents were employed in agriculture in California through November. They were denied formal education during the mid-portion of the school year due to that policy in the Mexican public school system. At this time there were approximately 20,000 of these migrant children in California schools.[1] A number of other U.S. states also had a substantial number of migrant students, many in a similar predicament, in their schools. The problems these children faced in gaining their education was tremendous and unique.

First, in California, they were confronted with a foreign language that they had to learn in order to succeed in school. Although there was formalized bilingual education in PVUSD, it was not always available in all schools, and thus there was little language development in the primary language. As a result, many of these children lacked proficiency in both Spanish and English.

Second, school attendance was interrupted by the migratory patterns that their parents followed, so that continuity in the development of academic skills and study habits was never attained. The interruptions in school attendance and undeveloped academic skills caused lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and little appreciation of education by the children. Many dropped out of school at a very early age.

Third, discrimination in both Mexico and the United States followed these children. In the United States, their status was the lowest in society. In their Mexican village, due to comparative material wealth and travel experience to the United States, they held a position perceived to be higher than those who had remained at home. These circumstances brought about unacceptable behavioral responses from children in both societies.

While I was pursuing my studies at the University of the Americas in Mexico City, I went to visit The American School (a school operated by the American School Foundation in Mexico City). One of the principals greeted me and asked me about my interest. I told him about the children from Gómez Farías. He said I must talk to Profesora Irene de la Llata de Anzaldúa. Meeting Profesora Anzaldúa was one of the most significant

[1] A count of these children was not known at this time, 1976. It became known several years later through a count I made, to be explained later in this story.

events in the development of this project. Profesora Anzaldúa was a principal for the elementary grades and liaison to the Mexican Ministry of Education for The American School in Mexico City. She had been educated in both Mexico and the United States. This gave her a unique preparation for involvement in the project.

I explained the circumstances of the international migrants to Profesora Anzaldúa and my idea to locate the village of Gómez Farías. Irene, as she now insisted that I call her, said that we should go to the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) before going to Gómez Farías. Irene told me to write a short description of the problems surrounding the international migrant children and give it to her. Irene said she would translate it into Spanish and then she and I would go to the director of primary education for seven states. His office was in Mexico City. I hurried back to my apartment, wrote the description she had requested, then dashed back to give Irene the letter before school was let out. The following day we went to speak to Professor Juan de Dios Rodriguez Heredia, Director of Primary Education, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), who was in charge of primary education for seven states, among which was Michoacán, where Gómez Farías was located.

Professor Rodriguez was most interested to learn about the international migrant children from his native state. He knew that there were Mexican immigrant students, but he was totally surprised to learn that there were students who migrated *annually* between Mexico and the United States. He was not aware that these children were not admitted to school upon their return to their village. Immediately, he said he would write an order that would allow the children admission to school. Also, he gave me a letter addressed to school authorities in California stating his intentions to permit the children to enter school upon their return to Mexico and his willingness to work cooperatively with California school authorities. He also suggested that Irene and I go to Gómez Farías and meet with the Inspector of Public Education in the area of Gómez Farías for the State of Michoacán. His office made those arrangements, thereby giving our visit official status.

Irene and I went by bus to Tangancicuaro, Michoacán (equivalent to a rural county seat in the United States) to meet with Inspector Ochoa Vega. He was most gracious and interested in assisting in every way possible to aid the children. He suggested that we return for a meeting with the Director and teachers of Benito Juárez School in Gómez Farías at a time he would arrange. Irene and I returned to Mexico City to await the appointment. I returned alone for this meeting toward the end of November 1976 as Irene was back at work.

The meeting at the school went very well. A migrant student, who was about 12 years of age, assisted in interpreting, as I was not fluent in Spanish. The teachers were anxious to try to remedy the problems of the interna-

tional migrant students. They spoke of the problems they had observed that were similar to those that their counterparts in the California schools had seen. The teachers suggested that I return for a meeting with the parents, which I did. One of the families invited me to be their guest, an invitation I readily accepted.

The following week, a meeting of the village parents was held in the plaza. I spoke in my halting Spanish over the loud speaker that had been set up for the occasion. The parents were most cordial and desirous of being involved in a program for the children. The next day, I went to Zamora, Michoacán, to board the bus for a 6-hour ride back to Mexico City to discuss developments with Irene.

Irene and I also thought it appropriate to contact the PVUSD in Watsonville, California, and ask that the California Master Plan for Migrant Education be sent to us. A friend, Dr. Manfred Shaffer, a professor from the University of California-Santa Cruz, Irene, and Elizabeth Elmer, an American educator, and I spent 5 or 6 hours discussing the possibilities, ideas, and programs that could help the international migrant students. The need to write a proposal and find out to whom it should be addressed was one of our greater concerns.

During Christmas vacation I went to Guatemala. On the first day, in an inn in Guatemala City, during dinner, the six guests were sharing information as to who they were and what they did. The man opposite me said he was Ralph Benner and that he had just retired as Assistant Director of Migrant Education in Sacramento, California. I was so amazed that the

Children at Benito Juárez School, Gómez Farías, Michoacán, Mexico. (Photograph by Arlene Dorn)

food practically fell out of my mouth. The very person I needed to talk to was sitting in front of me, not in Sacramento, but in Guatemala City! A few days later, I received word from home telling me that I had to return immediately due to my mother's poor health.

Upon my return to Santa Cruz, and after seeing that mother was being properly attended to, I went to see the superintendent of PVUSD, Dr. Wallace Raynor. I gave him the letter from Professor Juan de Dios Rodriguez and informed him of all that had taken place in Mexico. Dr. Raynor was very interested in the possibilities of a cooperative effort with the Mexican schools. It was propitious for the development of the project that Dr. Raynor was superintendent. He not only cared about helping these special children, but he had a perspective that allowed him to encompass a project that could not follow a preset notion of development. He said I should go to Sacramento to meet with Fred Wolff, who directed the California Migrant Education Program.

A fellow teacher and friend, Louise Minnear, accompanied me. Together, we presented the needs at the school district level and informed Mr. Wolff of the developments which had taken place in Mexico. I also gave him the letter from Professor Juan de Dios Rodriguez Heredia. Mr. Wolff was enthusiastic about the prospects of a cooperative program with Mexico. He asked me if I would like to have a part in the work. I immediately said yes, not realizing what would transpire over the coming years in the project's continued development.

The Project is Formalized

It was necessary at this time to take several steps to set up a formalized project. A letter from Fred Wolff to Juan de Dios Rodriguez Heredia had to be written, accepting his offer to work with California on behalf of the Mexican migrant children. Fred Wolff did this and gave me the letter to hand-carry back to Mexico upon my return in May, when I received my master's of arts in intercultural education. The next step was to write a proposal placing the pilot project in the PVUSD within the Migrant Education Program. Dr. Raynor had cleared the way for this to take place.

The writing of the proposal turned out to be a considerable task. After an attempt by the project writer at PVUSD, Fred Wolff came from Sacramento to Watsonville and wrote the proposal himself.

Approval of the governing board of PVUSD had to be obtained. The proposal, along with a budget that included my salary as coordinator, had to be approved. (My salary was to remain the same as that of a classroom teacher.) All the money for the project was coming from special funds out of the California Migrant Program. In spite of the fact that the project would not cost the district any money, school officials were hesitant in giving their approval because they were apprehensive of involvement with

a foreign government. However, the PVUSD governing board did approve the arrangement at its May 18, 1977, meeting.

In this initial stage other letters were sent to persons that had direct interest in migrant education, as well as to persons whose involvement was more peripheral. One of these letters was from Dr. Wallace A. Raynor to me. He expressed his appreciation for my work and gave me his full support. This letter, dated April 28, was given to me upon my preparation to return to Mexico to finish my degree. My mother's health had been stabilized, clearing the way for me to leave for Mexico.

Upon my return trip I presented Fred Wolff's letter to Professor Juan de Dios Rodriguez Heredia, stating his desire to work with the Mexican educators. At this point, the way was opened for planning strategies between the school in Gómez Farías, Michoacán, Mexico, and schools in the PVUSD. I named the project the Gómez Farías-Pajaro Valley Project. It was a pilot project. Our desire was to develop a program that could be replicated, since, as has been stated previously, there were internationally migrant children in many states in Mexico and in many states in the United States.

A significant letter went to Mr. Vic Rivera, Division of Education for the Disadvantaged, U.S. Office of Education, Washington D.C. The purpose of this letter was to inform Mr. Rivera of the project and also to get his opinion as to the legality of using Migrant Education Program funds for the project.

A fourth letter at this time went to Manual Ceja in the form of a memorandum from Fred Wolff. Mr. Ceja was in an administrative position over the California Migrant Education Program, and he was to become a staunch supporter of the project. In this memorandum Mr. Wolff stated that Licenciado Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Director of Education for Mexico, had heard of our efforts and also that I had met with Jerry Inman, Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy, Mexico City. Mr. Wolff told of his telephone conversation with Mr. Inman, who assured him of his support. Mr. Wolff asked that a letter from Dr. Wilson Riles, California State Superintendent of Education, be sent to Lic. Muñoz Ledo.

The Gómez Farías-Pajaro Valley Project

Things were now in place for the GFPVP to begin in September of 1977. My year of sabbatical was over and I was again working in PVUSD, but as coordinator of the project. My desk, which I had to purchase out of project funds, was placed in the Migrant Education Office. My immediate supervisor was Francisco Jimenez, Director of Migrant Education. He was supportive of the project, but left the school district early in the Project's history. Mr. Jimenez was under the direction of an assistant superintendent who was in charge of special projects within the district. In my opinion, and

many others, the assistant superintendent did not give his support for the GFPVP, although it was in fact he who had initially asked me to find out what I could about the school in Gómez Farías.

Through the early years of the project it was my perception that an attitude of "territorial jealousy" became a hindrance to the project's development in California within the educational community at both the PVUSD level and the California state level. The project was looked upon as being glamorous because of traveling to Mexico and Sacramento and working with people in prestigious positions on both sides of the border.

One incident which stands out in my memory took place in the first year of the project. We were trying to develop a transfer format that would work for both Mexican and California schools to communicate math and reading skills. Dr. Puentes of the California Migrant Education Program had considerable experience in developing record formats of a similar nature, so it was decided that he should go with me to Mexico to meet with the technical department there so that we could work out something together. The technical department was in Mexico City. Our appointment was on a Monday morning. However, we were going out to Michoacán over the weekend to meet with the school director from Gómez Farías, visit the school site, and meet with the inspector whose territory included Gómez Farías.

To prepare for a trip like this it was necessary to have the superintendent of my school district sign various papers. Verbal permission had been granted and tickets purchased. I telephoned Dr. Puentes to arrange our meeting at the San Francisco airport. I went to Superintendent Raynor's office (he had always been supportive of the project) for his signature. Upon arrival he said to me, "You know, Arlene, Dr. Puentes does not want you to go with him." I looked at him in amazement (I had the plane tickets in my purse at that moment) and said "I don't understand. I just talked to Dr. Puentes, 20 minutes ago, making arrangements where we would meet." Dr. Raynor got up from his desk and made a telephone call to Dr. Puentes, who told Dr. Raynor (I learned later) "There is no way I could go out there alone, I don't know how to find these people." Dr. Raynor returned to his desk and signed the papers. My belief is that a person in the school district simply lied. In my opinion the motive was pure jealousy. I ran into many more incidents where this type of hindrance interfered with the development of the project.

Dr. Puentes and I met on that Friday night after a full day's work for each of us, with an hour and half drive to San Francisco. We flew to Los Angeles to board the midnight flight to Guadalajara. The airline now caused us problems; they wouldn't let Dr. Puentes board. I could go, but not he. Naturally, I did not go. We began to find an alternate flight arrangement. By about 3 a.m. we had tickets on a flight to Mexico City, leaving early in

the morning! Therefore, we would board a flight to Mexico City, transfer to Guadalajara, retrieve our luggage which had preceded us on the original flight, and arrive for our appointments a day late! We were able to contact the persons in Michoacán a day late and still accomplish our objectives there. But that was not the end. We left Michoacán on Sunday afternoon by bus to return to Guadalajara to get our prearranged flight to Mexico City. Since we had been bumped from the original flight, we were automatically bumped from this flight too. If you are familiar with Mexico on Sunday evening, you know it seems that everyone in Mexico is trying to get home all at once!

How were we going to get to Mexico City for an eight a.m. appointment at the Ministry of Education (SEP)? We taxied to the bus station, but it too was swarming with people. Dr. Puentes enlisted the aide of a local resident, purchasing the last two tickets on a second-class bus, next to the smelly toilet! This was a nonstop bus, arriving at 6 a.m. in Mexico City. We had no chance to get a drink of water since leaving Michoacán and no opportunity now. What to do now? Shut our mouths to keep them moist, think this will end, and be glad not to have to use the toilet. We arrived, got a drink, went to the hotel, changed our clothes, and made our appointment on time! Glamorous? No. Worth it all? Yes.

I believe there was also a legitimate difficulty for the school district in that, through my contacts in Mexico, they were dealing with political entities on a noncorresponding level. This, I feel, put the PVUSD in a somewhat uncomfortable position. Such dilemmas also relate to the California situation and, I believe, had a profound effect on the timely development of the project.

The overall attitude in Mexico was quite different from that in California, though my personal judgment is all I have to rely on in making such claims. From the very beginning, the involved persons in Mexico were excited and willing to put considerable time and energy into establishing the project. Irene Anzaldúa, myself, and others, who later were to join us, were brought before a broad spectrum of officials—many in very powerful positions. Always we were accorded courtesy and sincere attention to the subject of the project and the needs of the children.

One of the main difficulties in Mexico related to timing and to their political system for appointments. It seemed that each time we returned to Mexico new persons were in office. When the president changed, new appointees were everywhere. If there was a new governor, new appointees followed. This didn't just happen immediately, but with a lapse of time that might involve two visits. We would then have to explain the whole project and its history all over again. However, the enthusiasm was always there, and the project was moved further ahead by appropriate persons who could

help in getting an institutional home for the project, which was a necessary step for its establishment.

Another difficulty in Mexico was a matter of logistics and the decentralization of Mexican educational institutions. Often it was necessary to go to the locale of the school in Michoacán, or to the state offices in Moralia, Michoacán, to confer with officials. This meant long rides on buses. Even the offices of SEP were located throughout Mexico City. Because of the size of the city and the bureaucracy, one was lucky to accomplish one appointment in a day. Mexican officials we encountered worked long days, but offices were scattered throughout the city.

The fact that the project was in a developmental stage and that this type of international work had never been done before by anyone made it most difficult for a local school board in California to handle the problems.

The Communication Process

The beginning of the actual work on the process of communication of the students' academic record from the California school to the Mexican school, Benito Juárez, took place in California. The California Migrant Education Program appointed Dr. William Kenny as their liaison to PVUSD and me. This was in the early fall of 1977. It was felt that it would be wise for me to have a co-worker travel with me to Mexico, and I agreed. Dr. Kenny asked if I would prefer a man or woman. I felt a man would be best to balance out the team.

Calvin Gunter, a migrant education resource teacher from the Visalia Migrant Education Program, was given this assignment along with his other responsibilities in the Visalia region. Mr. Gunter spoke Spanish fluently. He is a large man, probably six feet two inches tall, and quite blonde. I am five feet tall and very blonde. We made a conspicuous sight in the Mexican village! Our first visit to Gómez Farías was at a time when there was concern in the United States about Mexicans crossing illegally into the states. When we walked down the road in the village, residents thought we were from the INS! People didn't know that we were expected by the school director. Some of the children, back in Mexico from the schools in Watsonville, California, recognized me and the community's fears were put to rest. Along with the demanding work of the project, there were numerous amusing and pleasant times.

However, prior to our trip to Gómez Farías, much had to be done in Watsonville. A format had to be devised for communicating the child's academic record to the Mexican teacher. The question was how much, and in what manner, could information be meaningfully relayed? The two school systems were quite different; they operated on different philosophies. The child was placed in different grade levels in the different

systems. Most of the time, the children could not attend the Mexican school because they were not there in September when school commenced and textbooks allocated. Although you will recall that the first Mexican official, Rodriguez, gave a directive that the children could be admitted to school on their return, you probably also realize that things are never as simple in reality as they are on paper. The migrant parents, while still in California, had to be made aware of this directive, as well as all the involved officials in the Mexican state system. While Mexico's educational system was a federal system, the state was also involved.

Several steps had to be taken in California at the beginning of the school year. The Gómez Farías children had to be located out of the whole population of identified migrant students. They were enrolled in a number of different schools throughout the PVUSD. Also, they were in many different classrooms. This group of children numbered about 100. The families were *legal* aliens in California, and many were traveling back and forth in their newly purchased American vehicles.

After locating the children in school and gathering statistical data such as name, age, and so forth from the Migrant Student Record, our duty was to inform the teachers of the project. It would be the teachers who would confer with me as to their ideas on how best to format the information. They would be the ones to fill out the transfer document. This would have to be done, moreover, without prior notification of the students' departure. Generally, when fathers received notification that their work was over (in the late fall) they would pack up and leave the next day. Much of the time the children didn't know they were leaving until they got home from school. In that case, there co[illegible] be no transfer document sent with the child.

During the same period I met with the teachers, I also had to contact the parents. We wanted them to give the school at least a few days notice of their leaving so the teacher could gather the data to go to the Mexican school. Also, the Gómez Farías parents needed to know that they were able to enroll their children in the Mexican school and that they needed to bring back an academic transfer document from the Mexican teacher the following year. Parents work long hours daily in the fields; consequently, meeting with them meant arranging night meetings at the labor camps where they lived.

There was considerable discussion among all those involved in the project as to the form the transfer document should take. This discussion was necessary as we had to allow for the differences in language and educational systems. Not all students in California were in bilingual classes, and the Mexican teachers in Mexico did not speak English. Then there was the difference in curriculum in the two school systems. Some

teachers and school administrators were skeptical as to the feasibility of a transfer document.

Dr. Kenny introduced Dr. Charles Puentes from the California Migrant Education Program into the project. Dr. Puentes had worked extensively throughout the United States in the Migrant Education Program, helping to develop the process for communicating academic and health records for the migrant children who transferred among schools in the United States (the Migrant Student Record Transfer System). Thus, Dr. Puentes came into the project with a wealth of skills. He remained throughout the development of the project as one of its most dedicated supporters and workers, doing a great deal of work on his own time.

Finally, it was decided that the transfer document would be limited to communicating only reading and mathematical skills, attendance, and deportment data. The reading skills could be Spanish or English or both, whatever was appropriate for the child and teacher. The teacher could make any comment he or she felt helpful for the receiving teacher.

Easy? No! For all the reasons stated earlier: Parents leaving without giving the teacher advance notice of their departure; problems in locating the children from Gómez Farías in the classrooms; contacting all of the teachers; and gathering up the transfer documents which would later, in this beginning stage of the project, be taken to Mexico personally by me. In addition, the lack of support from the middle management level in PVUSD made for some very interesting and often frustrating times; but, despite these hindrances, we did it. It wasn't 100 percent, but it was a start.

The first trip to Mexico and the village of Gómez Farías took place in the winter of 1978. We always had to take account of school vacations on both sides of the border and of parents' travel schedules. This, too, was a bit complicated. The families stayed in Mexico for different lengths of time, varying from one to six months. Those who were in Mexico for only one month were not a big concern, as they returned to the California schools without missing too many days. However, all the others *were* a concern, and we wanted to include as many children as possible.

A trip to Mexico, when one is under contract to a school district, doesn't just happen overnight. There are many permission papers to sign and to be signed off on. It takes a bit of explaining. Mr. Gunter was going on this trip and, as we had never met or had an opportunity to plan together, he came to Watsonville from Visalia for a planning session. We had no problem in understanding what we hoped to accomplish and in realizing that plans had to be very flexible to accommodate the degree to which the Mexican authorities might want us to participate. This included activities and meetings with officials at national, state, and local levels. The mode of operation of the U.S. and Mexican bureaucratic process is quite different.

We weren't there to impose something of ours on them, but to work cooperatively for the benefit of the children we both shared. It was not only a political responsibility—but a moral one.

The trip went well at all levels. We met first with Irene Anzaldúa on all our trips. She was our valuable coordinator within Mexico. She knew the educational community well, and she understood our school system. She did all the work with us, gratis! We could not use project money for purposes outside the United States, other than for travel expenses. The project had not yet been institutionalized on either side of the border. We were in a discovering and development mode, and Mexico had not reached the place where they could budget special funds for the project's development.

We met with persons from different administrative levels and persons from the technical department of the Mexican school system (SEP) in Mexico City before going on to Gómez Farías. They were to work with us many times, and they went with us to Gómez Farías.

In Gómez Farías, we met with the director of the school, Professor Roberto Mercado, Inspector Professor Ochoa Vega from Taugancicuaro, and with teachers and parents, and we visited classrooms when in session. Our objective was to introduce the transfer document and to get reaction from the teachers in Gómez Farías as to whether the form was appropriate for the Mexican school. We explained to the school staff the communications from the California teachers. We left Watsonville in the winter before the children returned to California in the spring. During this visit, we were accorded much gracious hospitality by all.

Our next move was to return to Mexico City via the faithful bus trip of about 6 to 8 hours. Then make exit visits to the administrators in the office of Relaciones Internacional of SEP and the Cultural Attaché in the American Embassy. These visits were carried out by Mrs. Anzaldúa and myself. Mr. Gunter needed to return to Visalia for his regularly assigned work. I was always invited to stay in the home of Mrs. Anzaldúa. This, too, was a gracious act on her part, and it made the cost of the trips much less. Always—she gave, expecting nothing in return.

Various Operational Levels

Back in California in April and May, we awaited the return of the children—and hopefully the documents—by mail or by the families themselves. There were a number of things to be accomplished during this time of waiting. In the United States, there were several levels of migrant education conferences to attend. These were on national, state, and regional levels. The purpose was to inform migrant education personnel from other areas what we were hoping to accomplish.

At the national level, other states had a similar population. The children were home-based in many different villages scattered throughout a number of different states in Mexico, but the difficulties experimented by schools on both sides of the border were the same. The hardships the children and families experienced were similar. I had the opportunity, at various conferences, to give slide presentations, showing the Mexican school and depicting life in the village of Gómez Farías. These presentations were well received. We also wanted to keep the persons at the U.S. federal level apprised of our project's progress and activities.

At the California state level, conferences and activities were much the same, probably a little more specific since we were closer to home and the families resided in neighboring areas of Mexico, which made for cultural similarities. At the California state level, there were also migrant parent conferences to attend at different locations as well as one statewide conference. Our presentations in these cases were geared to informing and seeking the help of parents to carry out their role in the communication process. The parents at these conferences showed great interest. Most Mexican parents are anxious for their children to obtain a good education and learn to speak English. They view education and speaking English as the way out of their difficult lifestyle. Often, however, Mexican parents are intimidated by our educational system, so it is difficult for them to participate as we think they should. Also, their work schedule gives them little spare time. So we also wanted to help parents overcome these difficulties and participate in the U.S. educational system.

At the regional level within California, there were presentations made, always to a more specific audience.

At the school district level, presentations involved more contact with classroom teachers, discovering their needs. Often they were ignorant of the unusual problems their international migrant students faced. It was possible that there might be only one such child in the class, and so, for the teacher, it might seem like an isolated case. Some teachers were happy to do the extra work to fill out the transfer documents (which really took little time), but others weren't interested. I found that there were considerable differences from school to school in teachers' responses to the project.

Project Title Change to Project MEDIR

As the pilot project was reaching the close of the 2-year commitment PVUSD had made, it was clear that PVUSD did not wish to continue. Also, in the California State Department of Education, there were changes in leadership, and difficulties at that level had ramifications for the funding of the GFPVP.

At about this time I had discovered the fact that there was a directory of private foundations! I went to the library and began a search for a

foundation that would be open to the type of work we were doing. Ignorance is bliss, so it is said, and in my case, this was true. I wrote a letter to ten foundations, among them The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, which responded positively. They supplemented a partial funding from the State of California the next year, and they became the only funding agent of the project for the remaining years of my involvement.

The existence of the project is indebted to the vision and concern of Mr. Colburn Wilbur, executive director of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and to the understanding and faith in me and the project by Dolly Sacks, Program Director. The reason I say this is that with the project at this stage of development, one couldn't count any product as concrete evidence except for a few transfer documents that had made the round trip. In fact, the second group of transfer documents that were coming back from Gómez Farías were lost in transit in Mexico. Numerous meetings, a lot of interest shown, and things of this nature were the only concrete evidence to warrant the funding of the project. The fiscal agent for the project at this time was the superintendent of schools for Butte County, California, under the auspices of the Mini-Corps, a program related to the Migrant Education Program, based in Sacramento. Mini-Corps did my secretarial work via the mail; there was no FAX then. I was using my home as my office.

When PVUSD no longer wanted to be involved in the project in 1979, I took a temporary leave from the school district to continue work on the project. The project was renamed Project MEDIR, which stood for Migrant Education Data International Record. It was appropriate to change the name because several other school districts in California had begun to participate. As I recall these were Gonzales, Greenfield, Soledad, Cutler Orosi, Planada, Indio, and some schools served by Region III, headquartered in Merced, California. In Mexico, the development of the project had spread far beyond Gómez Farías, Michoacán, to Guanajuato, Monterrey, Jalisco, Nueva Leon, and other areas where educators were being made aware of the project.

During the first two years of the project, we wanted to explore the possibility of including the Mexican medical record of the child. Adriana Simmons, who was working with the Medi-Corps program, was asked to accompany me and Mr. Gunter to Mexico. The three of us contacted the main health office—similar to a California county health doctor—for the Gómez Farías area in Tangancicuaro. We were informed that it would be necessary to meet with health officials in Mexico City. There isn't the tie-in with health records in Mexico and the schools as there is in California.

We contacted the proper health agency and returned to Mexico City for a meeting. We came away with the sense that to communicate the health record, especially the record of immunizations, would be considerably easier than communicating the academic record simply because there is less

ambiguity. Upon our return, Ms. Simmons was not able to bring closure to our efforts. I recall this was about the time PVUSD was withdrawing from the pilot project. Some time later, when I became aware that she could not pursue this work, I contacted the Border Health Organization. Interest was expressed, and I attended one of the meetings in Tijuana, Mexico. I talked with some of the leaders, who suggested that I might present a paper at their next meeting. I felt that at this time I could not take on anything else. So including the child's health record was dropped. I felt there was great potential in this area, because it would be rather simple to show the economic value of this record, and economics speak loudly.

During the first 2 years of the project, Irene Anzaldúa and I thought it would serve the children well if they could bring their Mexican textbook back to California. In all Mexican elementary schools, children are given paperback textbooks that cover all areas of the curriculum. These then belong to the children. However, it was illegal for the books to be taken out of the country. We thought that if the children could bring them to California, it would give them continuity in their studies either by continuing their studies at home or, more probably, in their California classrooms. Having the Mexican texts would also be of help to the California teachers when there were no Spanish-language texts available. This held especially true in science.

We pursued the idea with the Mexican Ministry of Education (SEP), which granted permission. It was quite an involved process. But now, how were we to get that many textbooks to Watsonville from Mexico City? Some young men of a family who were friends of mine retrieved the books from the warehouse, got some makeshift boxes, packed the books, and hauled them to the U.S. Embassy. I then prepared them to go in the official Embassy mail to Texas. Then I paid postage to California from the meager project funds. In Watsonville, I stamped them with the project stamp and began to deliver them to teachers in PVUSD who had international migrant children in their classes.

I followed a regular pattern whenever I was going to Mexico, either alone or accompanied. Before going I contacted Irene and perhaps some Mexican official. Mexico had not assigned any particular person to be coordinator. Irene acted in this capacity purely on a volunteer basis, motivated by concern for these children. Early on in the project's development, she had suggested we contact officials at Relaciones Internacionales[2], a department within SEP. They assisted greatly. Also, I always made an exit visit to the American Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy to

[2] Dirección General De Relaciones Internacionales—SubDirección Der Intercambios Culturales, Mexico City.

inform him or her of my activity in Mexico. They, too, were of considerable help.

The personnel of Relacionales Internacionales changed many times. This was also true of other departments. This required me to describe the project again and again. But these repetitions never failed to move the project further ahead, even though it was not institutionalized.

During one of the trips to Mexico when Dr. Puentes participated, we both thought it would be a great advantage for the project's development if we could arrange for the people from Relaciones Internacionales and the people from the technical department to meet jointly with us. We were very pleased when this was accomplished. We also wished to have Irene Anzaldúa appointed as coordinator for Mexico. Our suggestion was that Mexico approach UNESCO to accomplish that goal. This they did, but with very different results.

UNESCO funded a tour of the Migrant programs—starting in Washington, DC, and ending the U.S. phase in California; and then proceeding to Mexico. The Mexican person assigned this tour was Carlos Compos from the technical department of SEP Mexico City, who had been with Irene and me in Michoacán. He was knowledgeable concerning the needs of the project and capable in offering suggestions. He was a very good choice for the task. On the other hand, the man chosen by the Migrant Education Program from Washington, DC, had no experience with the project. I thought a wise choice would have been someone like Dr. Puentes, a consultant with the California Migrant Education Program, who had extensive experience in Mexico and in the furthering of the project. The U.S. and Mexican representatives traveled together in each country observing things in general about migrant education, but as far as I know, this experience did not benefit our project. Unfortunately, Irene Anzaldúa did not get funded as coordinator.

During what might be called the second phase of the project, when it was known as Project MEDIR, I made the first count of international migrant students. The students in this category had never been separated from the count (MSRTS)[3] of all Migrant Students. Their special needs and circumstances were not recognized. No one knew how many students there were who returned to Mexico annually for a 1- to 6-month period and then returned to school in California.

In order to make this count, I sent a letter to all superintendents who had a migrant education program in their district asking for the number, grade

[3]A count made by each state through its migrant program. These records were also stored in a data bank at the MSRTS in Little Rock, Arkansas, as well as for local students at each school district.

level, and location of the students' home base in Mexico. For the most part, local school districts through their migrant program could retrieve this information from their local records. As I recall, I sent out 157 letters and received responses from over 100. From this information (all from relatively small districts) there was a count of about 8,000 children. From this number we estimated, based on general knowledge, that there must be about 20,000[4] students in California who were international migrants, migrating annually back and forth between Mexico and California. This number, taken from things I wrote or said, began to be used by others, with no verification or recognition of its source. I still have in my possession the original letters.

Over the years, I attended various migrant education conferences from national to local levels and at special interest groups, where I made formal and informal presentations. This was in both the United States and Mexico. On one occasion, I invited Profesora Roberta Lajous, from Relaciones Internacionales, to attend a national conference in Virginia Beach. At the conference, I introduced her to Vidal Rivera, national director of the Migrant Education Program. She had had difficulty in arranging appointments with persons with whom she wished to speak in Washington, DC, relative to the children of this project. I suggested she go through the Mexican Embassy, which she did. This opened up some appointments for her, I was told.

As always, the Mexican people and agencies—from local groups of parents and teachers, regional and state officials, to national educational and political persons—acted in favor of our efforts. Wherever we were, treated always with graciousness and hospitality, we worked to further the development of the project.

In 1984 the Butte County Office of the Superintendent was going through some change, and no longer wished to serve as fiscal agent for the project. At this time the La Cooperativa Campecina came into a relationship with the project and served as fiscal agent for only a short period, during which a conference was arranged in Morelia, Michoacán, with school officials from both countries present. One of the representatives, Dr. Jack Shaffer, then director of the California Office of Migrant Education, took the initiative and proposed that Project MEDIR be put under the jurisdiction of the California Migrant Education Program as the Binational Educational Program. It had always been our desire that the project be institutionalized within the Migrant Education Section of the California State Department of Education.

Space does not permit me to write about the involvement of the Ford

[4]This turned out to be a quite valid number.

Foundation, Commission of the Californians; The Research Colloquium on International Migrants held at the University of California, Santa Cruz; and a presentation at a Symposium on Mexican Immigration sponsored by the Center for Ethics & Social Policy in Berkeley. Also, there was work done by Sam Farr, Representative in the California State Assembly (now Congressional Representative), and Representative Leon Panetta, now Chief of Staff at the White House. These people and events all played a role in developing the program.

In August 1995, I was invited to attend the ninth Binational Program Conference in Denver, Colorado, where I was honored as founder of the Binational Program. I appreciated this gracious recognition. I was also glad for the opportunity to give recognition to the work of Profesora Irene de la Llata de Anzaldúa of Mexico as cofounder of the Binational Program. She was killed in an auto accident in Mexico in 1990. As I look back over the history of my part as founder of the program, I believe what I titled my remarks at the opening reception in Denver is true—"God made appointments for me!"